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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#) [MEPP](#)

SUBJECT: KING ABDULLAH TELLS CODEL SHAYS U.S. MUST STAY  
COURSE IN IRAQ, SUPPORT MAJOR STEPS IN MEPP

Classified By: Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm for Reasons 1.5 (b), (d)

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SUMMARY  
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1. (C) King Abdullah told CODEL Shays January 6 that Jordan strongly backs U.S. efforts in Iraq, but warned against handing over authority or withdrawing coalition troops prematurely. He expressed concern over terrorists infiltrating Jordan's borders, especially along the Saudi frontier, saying increased assistance could help mitigate the problem. Both King Abdullah and Queen Rania urged the U.S. to provide objective Arabic-language media coverage within Iraq and to develop methods to counter pervasive anti-Americanism in the region. The King was gloomy about progress in the Arab-Palestinian conflict, criticizing both sides and denouncing the Israeli security wall as short-sighted. End Summary.

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IRAQ  
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2. (C) CODEL Shays, accompanied by the Ambassador, met with King Abdullah and Queen Rania January 6 at the royal family's residence in Amman. The King noted that Jordan fully supports U.S. reconstruction efforts in Iraq and was providing training for Iraqis in many different fields. He expressed sharp concern, however, over whether Iraqis would be prepared to administer the country if the proposed transfer of authority took place this summer. There are many "disconnects" between the different factions in Iraq, some of whom have strongly opposing agendas, that have to be resolved before full sovereignty is restored to the Iraqi people. Premature elections in Iraq could prove disastrous, the King argued, and those within the Iraqi Governing Council who were pressing for an early transfer of power were likely motivated by their own personal agendas and a desire "to be in the driver's seat."

3. (S) The King agreed that Saddam Hussein's capture would lead to a gradual decline in attacks from supporters of the old regime. Attacks from Islamic terrorists, however, would most likely continue, necessitating the creation of a strong intelligence service within Iraq. According to the King, terrorists were still crossing into Iraq from both Syria and Saudi Arabia, along with anti-aircraft rockets and other weapons. While the Saudis were finally trying to take some action to stem this flow, the King deemed this "too little, too late" and worried that Al-Qaida and its allies were preparing for "the next level" of attacks both within Iraq and elsewhere. Withdrawal of U.S. forces depended on the Iraqis' capability to maintain security in the country. Military and security training programs needed time and the U.S. had to be "practical" about turning over security responsibilities. The King advised the U.S. to "gradually" lessen the number of its forces at the appropriate time to lower U.S. visibility and to show its commitment to ending the occupation.

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BORDER SECURITY  
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4. (S) In addition to security inside Iraq, the King expressed worries about security along Jordan's borders, claiming that terrorists were infiltrating Jordan from Syria. He emphasized special concern for security along Jordan's long border with Saudi Arabia. As Jordanian forces were already stretched too thin trying to patrol Jordan's borders with the West Bank and Iraq, Jordan simply could not adequately cover the Saudi frontier. The border's rugged terrain, including narrow passes hidden from sight, only increased the opportunities for people and weapons to be smuggled into or through Jordan. More aircraft and high-tech equipment could help increase security, but would not fully solve the problem.

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ARAB MEDIA AND ANTI-AMERICANISM  
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5. (C) Queen Rania interjected that the lack of objective

media outlets was a significant problem in Iraq, as well as the rest of the Arab world. Because the Iraqi public cannot readily hear U.S. views or pro-Western Iraqi leaders via the media, Iraqis instead rely on biased Arab news channels and rumors for their information. King Abdullah added that Arabs were, unfortunately, "infatuated with conspiracy theories" and preferred to focus on empty rhetoric, rather than grapple with real solutions to complex problems. In the case of Saddam Hussein, far too many Arabs concentrated solely on his populist grandstanding against the U.S. instead of asking what the dictator had really accomplished for the Iraqi people and for Arabs.

16. (C) The Queen labeled pervasive anti-Americanism "a danger" that needed to be effectively countered in "subtle ways," including exchange programs and people-to-people contact, rather than through propaganda. She shared her vision of an American university in Jordan staffed with U.S. professors who would teach American values and be a positive source of commentary for the media. The Queen hoped that even Israelis would be attracted to study at such an institution.

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MIDDLE EAST PEACE  
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17. (C) The King stated that both Israel and the Palestinians were failing to take the necessary steps to solve the ongoing crisis. While the Palestinians were still struggling to form a credible government "with Arafat always lurking in the corner," Israel was creating more barriers to peace by building its security wall. Although the wall might be attractive to some as a short-term security measure, it was very damaging to long-term prospects for peace and, therefore, to Israel's long-term security. Within 5-6 years, Palestinians would exceed 50% of the combined population of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, but Israeli actions were at odds with this demographic reality. King Abdullah said that he was "not optimistic" about the situation and foresaw only efforts at "damage control" in the next six months, with the U.S. and others asking both sides to take mere "baby steps" to lessen the ongoing violence. What is really needed are bold, major steps for peace.

18. (C) The King concluded by thanking the CODEL for U.S. economic and military assistance. He characterized Jordan as "an island in a sea of chaos," but said that continued military aid was "critical" if Jordan was to retain its stability while being pulled in so many directions on the security/military front (e.g., aiding Iraq's security and stepping up border patrols). Moreover, Jordan's bold economic and social reform program, of which U.S. assistance is a central component, "has to succeed." If the Jordanian "experiment" were to fail, the King predicted that hard-liners and the "old guard" throughout the region would use this as ammunition to resist change.

19. (U) CODEL Shays did not have an opportunity to clear this message.

110. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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